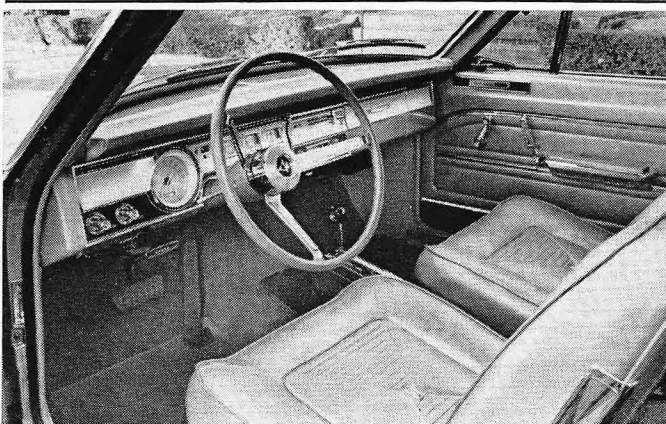




DODGE DART GT

Where would Chrysler be today without bright new cars like the Dodge Dart GT?



Five years ago, it looked as if Dodge—as well as the rest of Chrysler Corporation—might sputter down the same road that led Kaiser-Frazer, Hudson, Packard and Willys into oblivion. The cars they were building had comic-strip styling and reliability roughly equivalent to a three dollar watch; the twin marks of doom for any automaker. The Corporation's sales charts were beginning to conjure up memories of the Black Friday Panic of 1869 and everyone, from the stockholders to the dealers to the men on the line, knew precious little cushion was left before the Big Three suddenly became the Big Two.

That was five years ago. In 1961 Chrysler went through a gigantic schism that saw the old administration replaced by sound leadership that immediately set out to check the Company's plummeting sales. The scale of their success is one of the brightest chapters in Chrysler's long history and certainly one of the truly outstanding examples of shrewd, aggressive automotive management.

The plan to regain Chrysler's position in the marketplace, which had sagged from 25.7 per cent of sales in 1946 to 9.4 per cent in early 1962, was exquisitely simple. The first step involved a distillation of the models being produced, with the resultant culling of millstones like Dodge's compact Lancer and the entire De Soto line. Though this was a reversal of the Corporation's stubborn insistence to meet Ford and General Motors on the dealer level model-for-model, it meant more development and quality control could be devoted to the cars that remained in the line-up. In 1960, warranty work was draining funds out of Chrysler's coffers at a dreadful pace and the new ad-

ministration set out with messianic zeal to make the products stronger and more durable.

The famous 50,000 mile warranty was introduced and the competition snickered politely—for a few brief moments. Operating in conjunction with a revived spirit along the assembly lines and sharper planning at the engineering level, the new cars were tight and strong—and sure enough, the warranty work dipped to a point where the 50,000-mile guarantee not only became a working proposition but a whopping marketing success.

Four years later, Chrysler Corporation and specifically Dodge Division, are still gobbling up the margin separating themselves and the competition at a mighty pace. Dodge has set sales records in the past several years and continues as the reigning diva of the Chrysler cast. Much of Dodge's ascendancy to this lofty position must be attributed to the Dart—a model that was introduced in 1961 as a middle-sized-economy vehicle and became an immediate smash hit. In 1962 the Dart was cut in size to the rather modest wheelbase size of 111 inches and was clad with the same body panels as the smaller (106 in. wheelbase) Plymouth Valiant.

Viewing the Dart in its fanciest GT form, it's not hard to understand why the automobile has such a strong position in the present market. The car is neatly styled, with a strong familial identity to its big brother, the middle-priced Coronet. As has been the case with all recent Chrysler products, the Dart is visually understated; devoid of the gimmicky sort of automotive flying buttresses that made the Corporation's cars of the late-1950s such artistic disasters.

Equipped with the same drive train that transformed the Barracuda from a flabby boulevardier into a rugged middleweight (*C/D, October, 1964*), the GT comes off as a nice compromise for the family man who wants a little extra excitement for his automotive dollar. The combination of the optional 235-hp, 273-cubic inch V-8 and Chrysler's excellent three-speed TorqueFlite automatic transmission turns the Dart into an interesting, if not stunning, performer. The rest of the GT package is really nothing more than the standard decoys with which Detroit has snared so many customers since sports cars became fashionable a few years ago. The GT has bucket seats, a vinyl top, a quantity of chrome medallions speckling the bodywork and a console from which a hefty chrome selector lever protrudes.

With the TorqueFlite unit, the floor-mounted shifting arm is a genuine asset, because this is one automatic transmission that can actually be shifted. On upshifts, the changes can be made as they would with a manual gearbox. One merely revs to the desired level in first, then moves the selector lever to second, and so on. Downshifts from third to second are also possible, though first gear can't be engaged until the car is almost at a standstill. The TorqueFlite unit is highly adaptable for performance driving—as evidenced by its overwhelming superiority over manual units in Super Stock drag racing—and we find it a constant delight to operate. The unit has such a positive bite throughout the upper rev range that it seems hard to believe that there is any slipping or frictional loss in the works at all. There is, however, some noticeable power dissipation at lower rpm's. As is the case with the entire Chrysler line, only personal taste should arbitrate whether or not the buyer orders his car with the Corporation's excellent four-speed or TorqueFlite. There is an inexorable trend in all phases of performance motoring toward automatic transmissions, and today no man need hang his head in shame when some purist assaults him for driving a car equipped



STANLEY Z. ROSENTHAL

with one of the new three-speed automatics.

The 235 hp V-8, which owes its boost over the standard 180-hp unit to a hotter cam and a four-barrel carburetor, is worth every cent of its \$99.40 extra cost. It is a robust, eager engine that makes all sorts of neat sounds while whisking the Dart around in fairly impressive fashion (0-60 in 8.2 seconds). The exhaust is the same as the one that sent us into fits of rapture when we discovered it on the Formula S Barracuda (October, 1964) and, as we observed then, the noise alone is worth the extra expense.

In a complete departure from those grim days when all Chrysler Corp. cars seemed to be moulded, like cheap toy soldiers, out of white metal, the Dart GT—as well as the rest of the Dodge line—has a basic feeling of strength. The body panels fit properly and there were very few rattles in the car we tested, despite the fact that it had been thrashed around for over a month by a series of particularly insensitive drivers before it got into our hands.

There is little question that the Dart is Dodge's counterpart to the Barracuda, and several of the same components, including a synthetic wood-rimmed steering wheel, are used on both vehicles. Though it can hardly be described as a major flaw, we found the steering wheel positioned ever-so-slightly too high and too close to the driver's chest. If it could be lowered an inch and moved an equivalent distance nearer the dashboard, our dissent would be silenced.

The interior of the car is well laid out and neatly appointed. Our Dart GT's bucket seats were quite comfortable, though they provided negligible lateral support under severe cornering conditions. This in itself isn't a

disaster, because most so-called "buckets"—foreign or domestic—are worse.

Dodge makes an optional heavy-duty suspension package available for the Dart and we would recommend its purchase. In stock form the car has a decidedly wobbly feel about it, though it will navigate a fast corner with surprising style and grace. Without stiffer shocks and springs, we feel the car might outhandle the stock Barracuda, but, conversely, the latter would probably have the edge if both machines were equipped with the available suspension options.

Of all the available power steering setups, Chrysler's is the least appealing. So vague that one sometimes wonders if the shaft has broken, the system simply needs more turning resistance and feedback. This would not be difficult to correct, though we really question the need for power steering on a relatively light (3040 lbs.) automobile like the Dart.

It was while we were testing the Dart GT that Dodge announced that number 421,302 of the marque moved off the company's Hamtramck, Michigan assembly line, thereby permitting Dodge to become the first major automaker to have its 1964 production surpass its 1963 output. It is this sort of news that has returned Dodge—and more generally the entire Chrysler Corporation—to its strong position in today's market. The stock is firm, they have probably suffered less than Ford and General Motors in the recent labor negotiations, and the Corporation's morale is at an all-time high.

As long as they continue to market bright, contemporary vehicles like the Dart GT, there should be no niggling fears at Dodge and Chrysler that those nightmarish days of 1960-61 might ever return.

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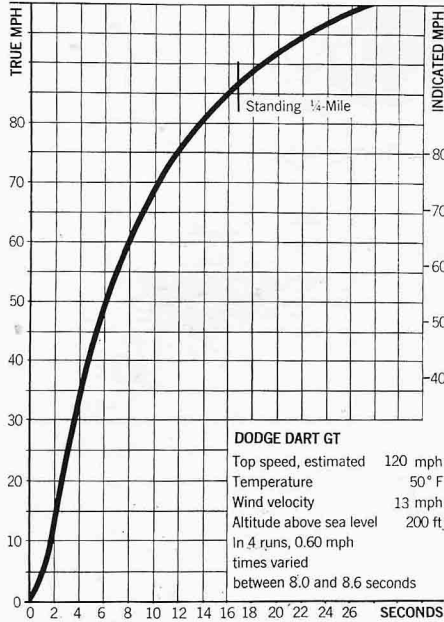
DODGE DART GT

Manufacturer: Dodge Division of
Chrysler Corporation,
Detroit 31, Michigan

Price as tested: \$3322.50

ACCELERATION

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.6
40 mph	4.8
50 mph	6.3
60 mph	8.2
70 mph	10.5
80 mph	13.8
90 mph	18.7
100 mph	27.5
Standing 1/4-mile	8.7 mph in 16.9



ENGINE

Water-cooled V-8, cast iron block, 5 main bearings
 Bore x stroke..... 3.63 x 3.31 in, 92 x 89 mm
 Displacement..... 273 cu in, 4481 cc
 Compression ratio..... 10.5 to one
 Carburetion..... Single four-throat Carter
 Valve gear.. Pushrod-operated overhead valves
 (mechanical lifters)
 Power (SAE)..... 235 bhp @ 5200 rpm
 Torque..... 280 lbs-ft @ 4000 rpm
 Specific power output..... 0.86 bhp per cu in,
 52.5 bhp per liter
 Usable range of engine speeds 1000-5000 rpm
 Electrical system... 12-volt, 48 amp-hr battery
 Fuel recommended..... Premium
 Mileage..... 12-18 mpg
 Range on 18-gallon tank..... 210-325 miles

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch... TorqueFlite hydraulic torque converter
 Transmission..... 3-speed planetary
 mph/1000

Gear	Ratio	Over-all	rpm	mph
Rev	2.20	7.11	—10.9	—50
1st	2.45	7.91	9.8	45
2nd	1.45	4.68	16.5	80
D	1.00	3.23	24.0	120

 Final drive ratio..... 3.23 to one

CHASSIS

Unit-construction, all-steel body.
 Wheelbase..... 111 in
 Track..... F 55.9 R 55.6 in
 Length..... 196.5 in
 Width..... 70 in
 Height..... 54.5 in
 Ground clearance..... 6.5 in
 Dry weight..... 2960 lbs
 Curb weight..... 3040 lbs
 Test weight..... 3300 lbs
 Weight distribution front/rear..... 58/42%
 Pounds per bhp (test weight)..... 14.0
 Suspension F Ind., unequal-length wishbones
 and torsion bars.
 R Rigid axle and semi-elliptic leaf
 springs.
 Brakes 10-inch drums, front and rear, 251.3
 sq in swept area
 Steering..... Rack and sector (power assisted)
 Turns, lock to lock..... 3.5
 Turning circle..... 37 ft
 Tires..... 7.00-13
 Revs per mile..... 831

CHECK LIST

ENGINE

Starting..... Good
 Response..... Good
 Noise..... Fair
 Vibration..... Fair

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch action..... —
 Transmission linkage..... —
 Synchromesh action..... —
 Power-to-ground transmission..... Fair

BRAKES

Response..... Good
 Pedal pressure..... Fair
 Fade resistance..... Fair
 Smoothness..... Good
 Directional stability..... Good

STEERING

Response..... Poor
 Accuracy..... Good
 Feedback..... Poor
 Road feel..... Poor

SUSPENSION

Harshness control..... Fair
 Roll stiffness..... Fair
 Tracking..... Fair
 Pitch control..... Good
 Shock damping..... Excellent

CONTROLS

Location..... Fair
 Relationship..... Good
 Small controls..... Good

INTERIOR

Visibility..... Good
 Instrumentation..... Good
 Lighting..... Good
 Entry/exit..... Good
 Front seating comfort..... Good
 Front seating room..... Good
 Rear seating comfort..... Fair
 Rear seating room..... Good
 Storage space..... Good
 Wind noise..... Good
 Road noise..... Fair

WEATHER PROTECTION

Heater..... Good
 Defroster..... Good
 Ventilation..... Fair
 Weather sealing..... Good
 Windshield wiper action..... Fair

QUALITY CONTROL

Materials, exterior..... Good
 Materials, interior..... Good
 Exterior finish..... Good
 Interior finish..... Good
 Hardware and trim..... Good

GENERAL

Service accessibility..... Excellent
 Luggage space..... Good
 Bumper protection..... Good
 Exterior lighting..... Good
 Resistance to crosswinds..... Fair

